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SUBJECT: JUNBESH LOOKS AHEAD TO LIFE AFTER DOSTUM

REF: REF: 3104 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor Alan Yu for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) SUMMARY. Junbesh-e-Milli leaders are scrambling to lead the party in a new direction following Gen. Dostum's exit from Afghanistan. Junbesh, the country's largest ethnic Uzbek political organization, receives the bulk of its funding from foreign governments, which also influence the party's direction. Dostum, too, has kept his hands in the party's affairs from Turkey, where he is on an indefinite stay. At stake is Junbesh's role in this year's presidential election, as key leaders remain split over whether Uzbek interests align with President Karzai or the United Front opposition.

Dostum in Turkey, But Still Haunts Junbesh Politics  
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¶2. (C/NF) Dostum arrived in Turkey Nov. 30 after weeks of negotiations with Karzai and the Turkish government. His departure from Afghanistan followed a resolution to a dispute with a political rival and, some say, came in exchange for a guarantee of a continued role in Afghan politics (reftel). Sayed Noorullah, hand-picked by Dostum and elected chairman by party members last summer, nominally was to take charge of the party. However, several Uzbek leaders say Dostum gave conflicting instructions as he boarded the Turkish plane to Ankara. No less than three Junbesh lieutenants insist Dostum left them in charge of the party, while others, including the general's brother (an Upper House MP), are also clamoring for a say in the party's future.

¶3. (C/NF) Noorullah welcomed Dostum's apparent exit from Afghan politics and called the general's past behavior an "embarrassment." He said he controls the party and has the backing of most of its members. Noorullah splits his time between Kabul and his home base in Mazar-e-Sharif, working a network of Dostum supporters. Noorullah plans to move the party into a closer relationship with the government, a direction Dostum had appeared to be heading in before he left, although for his own reasons. However, MP Shaker Kargar (Faryab, Uzbek) told PolOff Dostum had tasked him with leading Junbesh and will maintain the party's membership in the United Front. MP Faizullah Zaki (Jowzjan, Uzbek), an anti-Dostum reformist, prefers an alliance with the United Front but is weary of rejecting Noorullah's legitimacy as the elected party chairman. He has yet to take sides.

¶4. (C/NF) Dostum added to the confusion in late December by instructing his Aina television station to report that MP Mawlawi Abdul Khair (Sar-e-Pul, Uzbek) was the new chairman. Khair, an unpolished Dostum protege, has few contacts and no party base of his own. Afghan Uzbek contacts say their Turkish patrons have instructed them to ignore Dostum and recognize Noorullah as chairman.

## Junbesh's Foreign Patrons

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¶5. (S/NF) Junbesh members say the Turkish government is taking steps to isolate Dostum, fearful that Dostum's continued popularity among rank-and-file Uzbeks will hurt the credibility of the party's new leaders. According to MP Baz Mohammad Jowzjani (Jowzjan, Arab), the Turks are reworking their support of Aina TV to give more control over its programming to Noorullah.

¶6. (S/NF) Junbesh receives its funding primarily from the governments of Turkey and Uzbekistan, with smaller amounts from the business interests of the party's leadership. MP Jowzjani said a Turkish Embassy defense attache in Tashkent distributes cash payments to party leaders. It's unclear to what extent Turkey coordinates its funding with the Uzbek government, although all sources say Turkey supplies the lion's share of cash. Since Dostum's exit, most observers say Noorullah appears to be collecting most of the party's funding. Noorullah, a former intelligence official in the Najibullah government, has his own extensive contacts with foreign governments. Khair and Dostum's brother, Abdul Qader, may have access to the party's existing assets in Kabul. Kargar and others may also receive their own funding from Turkey, Uzbekistan, or Russia.

## Turkey Hopes to Minimize Dostum's Influence

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¶7. (S/NF) Jowzjani said Turkish officials have been actively lobbying the Uzbek community and Karzai to recognize

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Noorullah as Junbesh leader. The Turks fear an increasingly restless Dostum may lash out against his Turkish "hosts" and seek to delegitimize their new chief client Noorullah. Despite his erratic behavior, which many link to rampant alcoholism, Dostum remains the most influential figure among Uzbeks. A Junbesh youth wing leader in Faryab Province said his group will support Dostum's presidential candidate, not Noorullah's. Other Uzbek organizations have said the same. Junbesh MPs say Turkish officials are working with them to reach out to grassroots constituencies in northern provinces to marginalize Dostum. Most prefer a strategy that recognizes Dostum as a great past military leader, but emphasizes rallying around younger, more educated leaders. Junbesh officials say Ankara has promised to keep Dostum in Turkey for as long as possible, even amid signs the general wishes to cut his medical treatment short.

## Looking Ahead to the Presidential Campaign

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¶8. (C/NF) Across all factions, Junbesh leaders say they will not field their own presidential candidate (Dostum finished fourth in 2004, winning the most votes in Jowzjan, Faryab, Sar-e-Pul, and Takhar). Instead, the party will align with a stronger candidate and pursue high-level positions in the Cabinet. By many accounts, Dostum struck a deal with Karzai, exchanging freedom for political support. However, most Junbesh MPs say they will support the United Front's candidate or a consensus candidate who can split Karzai's Pashtun base. Noorullah is likely to support Karzai for his own reasons. If Dostum and the party's new leadership diverge, Junbesh risks losing credibility should the bulk of Uzbek votes follow Dostum's endorsement. Risk-averse party leaders may very well second Dostum's endorsement to avoid jeopardizing the party's status and their own.

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